

ARMED FORCES COVENANT - SCRUTINY

Briefing on Children, Young People and Families Theme Group

7 November 2022



Introduction: Plymouth AFC - Children, Young People & Families Theme Group (AFC-CYP&F)

Plymouth City Council (PCC) facilitates the AFC-CYP&F Theme Group, where a number of key partners and colleagues across Plymouth, come together to add value to existing activity, working collectively to support children, young people and their families in their wellbeing and development. Currently, the Education, Participation and Skills Team, within PCC provide this facilitation role, however the activity of the Theme Group, includes valuable input from across PCC. The Theme Group aims to reduce barriers to learning and development by recognising, supporting and raising awareness of the often unique challenges that life in an armed forces family presents. Its activity relates directly to section 3.7 (*Champions the needs of service and veteran children and their families in Plymouth*) of the covenant and indirectly to its wider aims.

Organisation: Plymouth AFC – Children, Young People and Families Theme Group

The AFC-CYP&F Theme Group meet on three occasions throughout the academic year, supported by continual virtual contact (and in an ad-hoc manner via sub-group or project related activity). The AFC-CYP&F Theme Group now act as a strategic group and determine the armed forces related content of the new ‘Young Carers and Service Family Leads Hub (YC&SF Leads Hub)’ – a network of the workforce that exists within schools, that provide the educational, pastoral and therapeutic support for children, young people and their families, within the school environment. This YC&SF Leads Hub, provides a new level of development for existing school based colleagues, which builds on a successful and existing model of coordination. Utilising existing research (e.g. Service Children in state Schools Report – Thriving Lives Toolkit Evaluation 2022), guidance (e.g. UK Armed Forces Families Strategy – 2022/2032), consultation with children and young people (e.g. Youth Participation / RBL creation of video – ‘What Life is Like in a Service Family’), evidence from partners and school intelligence, the AFC-CYP&F Theme Group are currently developing its annual action plan, which will be agreed during the next scheduled meeting (February 2023). The Theme Group continually evolves and develops, recently introducing a standing Agenda, rolling Chairpersonship and strategic oversight of the ‘YC&SF Leads Hub’. It is currently finalising a new Terms of Reference and the developed annual Action Plan. Representation at meetings, continues to be a challenge, thus a blend of virtual meetings and a network approach, utilising online communications is being developed. Mental Health and Wellbeing continues to be the central area that the Theme Group focuses its efforts upon, with the assertion that existing wellbeing challenges faced by service family children and young people have potentially been exacerbated by the Covid 19 pandemic, the increasing economic challenges that face Plymouth’s communities and the unsettled nature of wider world relations and ongoing conflict.

Activity: Plymouth AFC - Children, Young People & Families Theme Group

Over the lifetime of the Community Covenant (and now the Armed Forces Covenant), the CYP&F Theme Group has worked collectively to support children young people and their families. It is noted that the current activity of the AFC-CYP&F Theme Group builds upon, and is informed by, previous nationally recognised best practice, within the City. Some examples of previous and present collective activity include:

- Supporting the Royal British Legion’s activity regarding the Military Kids Club Heroes network (pupil voice group for the children and young people of Service personnel and veterans)
- Raising awareness of the challenges faced by service family children and young people (for example the production of the ‘What Life is Like in a Service Family’ Video - <https://vimeo.com/533532894>)
- Applying, supporting and directing grants for service family related activity
- Promoting and supporting Local and National services related events and days of importance (e.g. Armed Forces Day, Remembrance etc.)
- Facilitating peer support through a range of events, sessions, groups and clubs

Development: Plymouth AFC - Children, Young People & Families Theme Group

Core areas of development for the Theme Group going forward are:

- Increase participation from the colleagues, partners and organisations within Plymouth that have influence regarding the wellbeing of service family children and young people and integrate activity with the other AFC Theme Groups.
- Utilise further, the voice of service family children and young people to develop education and pastoral support.
- Advocate for service family children and young people regarding the identified areas of development with the UK Armed Forces Families Strategy – 2022/2032 (Admissions, Transport, Attendance, Additional Needs support, Educational attainment and curriculum, Student Wellbeing, Use of Pupil premium).